

Is The House Health Care Bill Bad Medicine For Our Nation?

Last Saturday, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to pass H.R. 3962, a health care overhaul that contains over two thousand pages of text that raises taxes, dramatically expands government control of health care, and offers the threat that eventually all medicine will be rationed by Washington bureaucrats.

As a physician, I've seen first-hand the problems insurance companies created for patients. I've seen first-hand how government programs have made beneficiaries worse consumers of health care. I've seen how the cost of health care has exploded, and made insurance unaffordable. I want to fix these problems. But this bill will not fix these problems — it will make them worse.

For months I've gone to the House floor with many of my physician colleagues to talk about the problems with this plan. 15 years ago, our state's TennCare plan tried to provide universal coverage and make health insurance affordable, and in the end it nearly bankrupted the state as the program tripled in cost. It created an incentive for beneficiaries to seek unnecessary care because it cost them nothing. It shifted costs to the private plans, who were forced to make up the underpayments of the government program, increasing everyone's premiums. 45 percent of those on our public plan previously had private insurance and either dropped their coverage or were dropped by their employer.

H.R. 3962 is a Christmas tree of special interest provisions. Sanitation facilities for Indian tribes, biofuel tax credits, nutrition standards for chain restaurants, and references to pizza and doughnuts all made it into this bill, but somehow, Democrats could not come up with a real solution for medical malpractice reform.

This bill taxes everyone and everything. It taxes medical devices. It taxes individuals who choose not to purchase insurance, and drives up premiums for individuals who do purchase insurance. It taxes employers who fail to offer health insurance, then taxes them further if they try to increase their employees' wages. It taxes small business owners, who could be creating jobs and getting us out of the recession, and instead forces them to cut jobs or wages. It taxes health savings accounts, which reduces the use of catastrophic health insurance coverage. It cuts Medicare. Home health care, skilled nursing facilities and Medicare Advantage would all be cut, and seniors with prescription drug coverage will have their premiums increased. Seniors oppose this bill because they get it — their care is going to be decreased and costs are going up.

After the bill finishes up taxing everything and everyone, it spends all that money even faster. The bill dramatically expands Medicaid, despite the fact that I've never heard of anyone saying they want access to the program. It creates a huge new federal bureaucracy to navigate through. And it funds a government competitor to private insurance companies that will siphon people off of private insurance onto a Medicaid-like program, just like Tennessee did with TennCare.

After the Democrats finish spending \$1.5 trillion, they say the bill is quote unquote deficit neutral. But they ignore that every major government health care expansion before it — Medicare, Medicaid, SCHIP to name a few have cost more than originally estimated. And they completely ignore the fact that they use 10 years of revenue to pay for 7 years of new spending. In the second decade, this program will become an enormous unfunded mandate on state governments, on individuals and on the federal government. Despite the largest deficit in our nation's history, the

Democrats are irresponsibly going to make it harder to ever balance the budget.

On Saturday, I supported legislation offered by House Republicans to lower costs and expand access to quality care — especially for those with pre-existing conditions — without adding to the crushing debt Washington has placed on our children and grandchildren. Our plan will lower premiums by up to 10 percent, making health care more affordable for families and small businesses. That's what the American people want, and that's what I will continue to fight for.